

Reptiles of Montana

Montana Field Guide

Note

These PDF versions of the Montana Field Guide are intended to assist in offline identification and field work. They are not intended to replace the live Field Guide, as that version contains more information and is updated daily.

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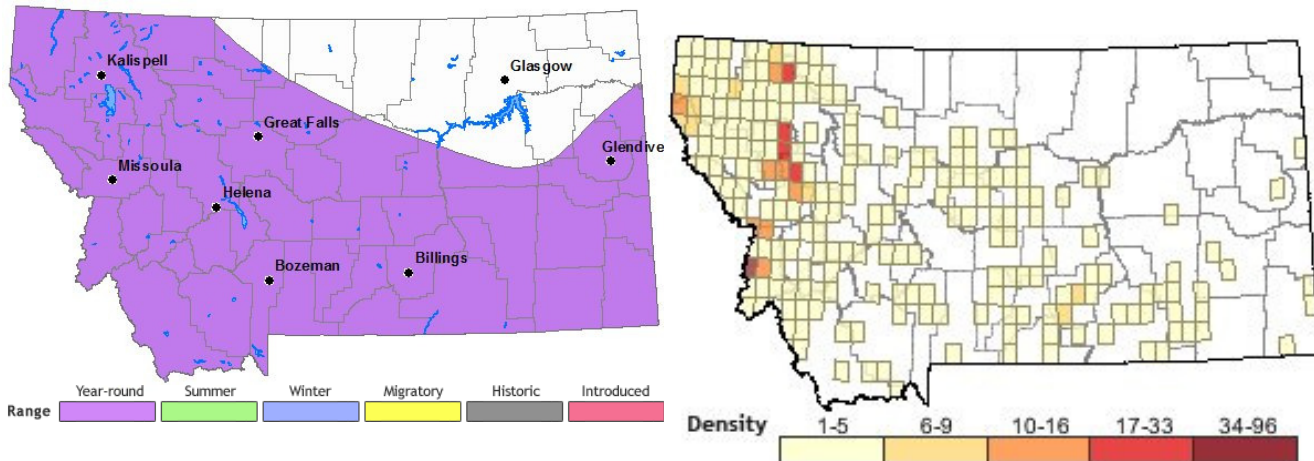
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Common Gartersnake - *Thamnophis sirtalis*



Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S4

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS:
BLM:



Number of Observations: 1050

General Description

Adult Common Gartersnakes range from 16 to 42 inches in length. This snake has two color variations in Montana. The first has three yellow longitudinal stripes (one dorsal and two lateral) and a black stripe broken by red spots between the yellow stripes. The lateral stripes are located on the second and third scale rows above the belly scales. The second color variation has the same striping pattern but lacks the red dots. In both variations, the background color between stripes is black to dark olive. The belly color ranges from yellow to bluish, and some individuals of the red-sided color variation have small black spots on the edge of the belly scales. The dorsal scales are keeled, and normally there are seven scales on the upper lip. Coloration varies geographically. There are 19 dorsal scale rows at mid-body and lateral stripes on the 2nd and 3rd scale rows (also on row 4 in subspecies *annectens*). There are 7 upper labials, 1 preocular, and 3 postoculars. The scales are keeled, and the anal undivided. The total length of adults is usually 41 to 66 centimeters (up to 131 centimeters). Common Gartersnakes are around 12 to 23 centimeters at birth (Conant and Collins 1991, Smith and Brodie 1982).

Habitat

Common Gartersnakes are found in nearly all habitats, but most commonly at lower elevations around water. Females give birth to 6 to 18 live young during summer. They eat a variety of vertebrates and invertebrates. They prefer moist habitats and are found most often along the borders of streams, ponds and lakes (Franz 1971, Brunson and Demaree 1951, Anderson 1977). They may travel long distances (4 to 17 kilometers) from hibernacula to forage in preferred habitat (Gregory and Stewart 1975).

Common Sagebrush Lizard - *Sceloporus graciosus*

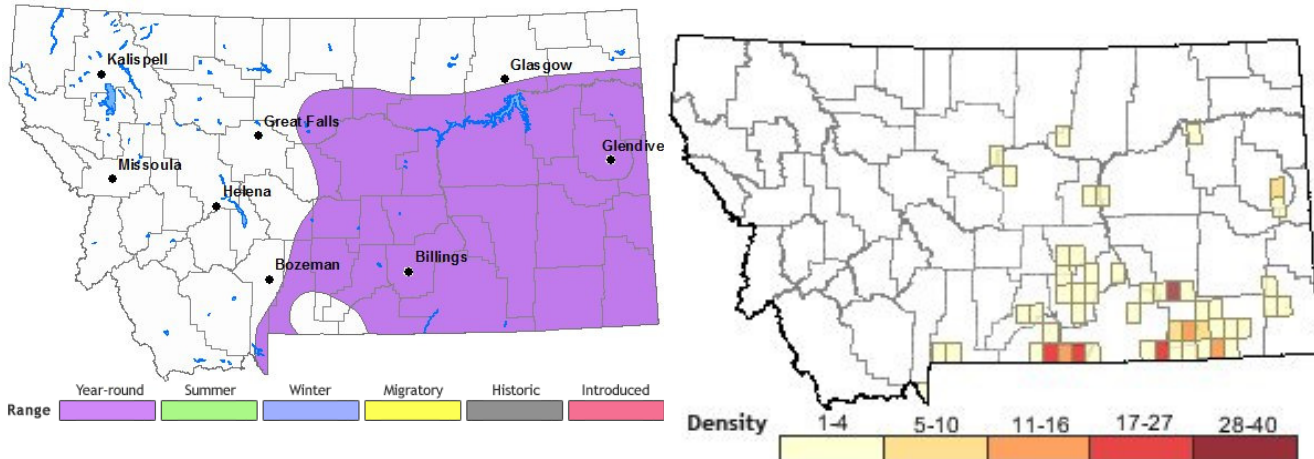


Species of Concern

Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S3

Agency Status

USFWS:
USFS:
BLM:



Number of Observations: 334

General Description

The body of the Common Sagebrush Lizard is small and narrow. The back is covered with small spiny, keeled scales, and usually has a pale dorsolateral stripe on each side; scales on the rear of the thigh are very small and often granular. Dorsal coloration is brown, olive or gray with a bluish or greenish tinge. Ventral surfaces of females are white or yellow; males have blue lateral abdominal patches and blue mottling on the throat. Maximum snout-vent length (SVL) is about 6.5 centimeters; maximum total length is about 15 centimeters, with the tail length about 1.5 times the snout-vent length. Mature males have enlarged postanal scales with two enlarged hemipenial swellings on the underside at the base of the tail. Gravid females may develop a reddish-orange color along the sides. Hatchlings are 2.3 to 2.8 centimeters SVL; eggs are white and leathery, and 12 to 14 millimeters in length by 6 to 8 millimeters in breadth.

Habitat

Habitat use in Montana has not been the subject of detailed studies. However, occupied habitats appear similar to other parts of the range (P. Hendricks personal observation). This species occurs in sage-steppe habitats, sometimes in the presence of sedimentary rock outcrops (limestone and sandstone), and in areas with open stands of limber pine and Utah juniper (Hendricks and Hendricks 2002) or ponderosa pine. In many places, open bare ground is abundant, grass cover is less than 10%, and height of shrub cover may be as low as 0.25 meters.

In Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming it is found at higher elevations in geothermal areas (Koch and Peterson 1995). Favored areas tend to have a high percentage of open bare ground and a component of low to tall bushes, such as sagebrush and rabbitbrush (Stebbins 1985, Green et al. 2001). Although a ground dweller, this lizard will perch up to 1 to 2 meters above ground in low shrubs and trees (Hammerson 1999). It uses rodent burrows,

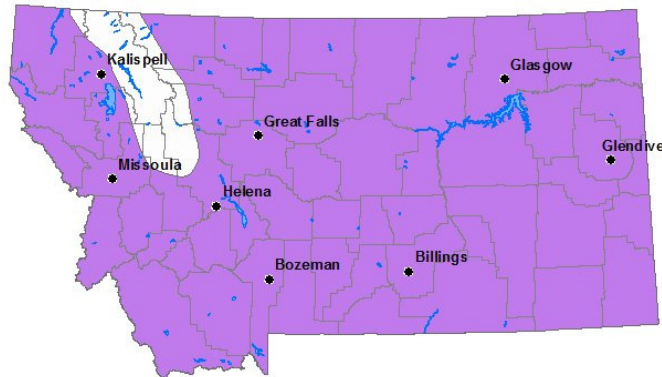
shrubs, logs, and rocks for cover.

Eastern Racer - *Coluber constrictor*

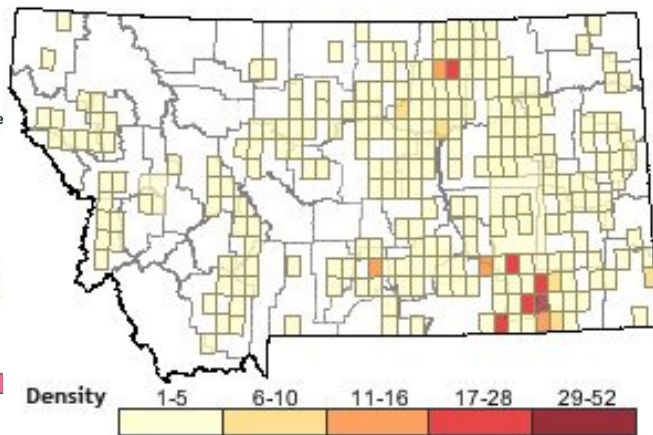


Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S5

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS:
BLM:



Range Year-round Summer Winter Migratory Historic Introduced



Density

1-5 6-10 11-16 17-28 29-52

Number of Observations: 870

General Description

A slender, moderately long snake, the Eastern Racer ranges from 20 to 65 inches in length. In adults, color of the back can vary from uniform greenish gray to brown or blue. The belly is whitish to pale yellow, the latter extending onto scales of the upper lips and nasal region of the head. The eyes are relatively large, and the scales are smooth. Young snakes (up to about 20 inches) have a much different coloration than adults. On the back, a series of brown blotches edged with black runs the length of the snake; a row of blotches on each side also extends onto the belly.

Habitat

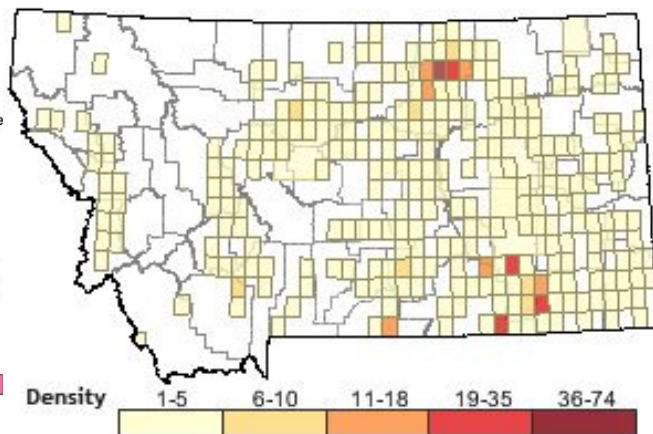
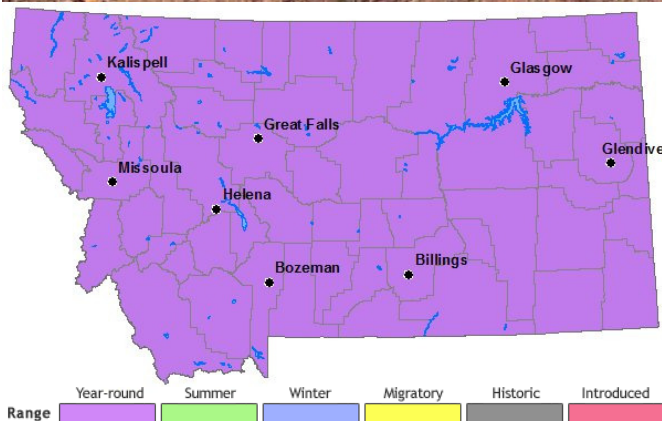
Eastern Racers are associated with relatively open habitats either in shortgrass prairie or forested areas. Very fast and active, they prey on insects and small vertebrates such as mice and frogs. Females lay a clutch of three to seven eggs in summer. In WY, primary habitats are scarp woodlands of plains and foothills often near water (Baxter and Stone 1980). Some cover seems especially important on shortgrass prairie (Fitch 1963). In the NW, Eastern Racers generally absent from dense forest/high mountains (Nussbaum 1983)

Gophersnake - *Pituophis catenifer*



Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S5

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS:
BLM:



Number of Observations: 1090

General Description

The Gophersnake or Bullsake is Montana's largest snake and can reach a length of 7 feet; most range in length from 3 to 5 feet. It can be readily identified by a series of large black to brown blotches that run down the back, and another series along the sides. The blotches, which are set on a yellow background, become more widely spaced toward the tail. The dorsal scales are keeled (have a ridge running down the center). A black band can usually be seen on the head in front of and extending below the eyes. The belly is yellow to white, often spotted with black. Dorsal coloration varies geographically, but in most areas has numerous dark blotches on a cream or yellowish background.

Habitat

Gophersnakes are associated with dry habitats, including open pine forests. They feed on rodents, rabbits, ground-dwelling birds, and to a lesser extent lizards. They sometimes hiss and vibrate their tail when alarmed, producing a sound similar to that of rattlesnakes. They occasionally climb trees. Females lay 2 to 24 eggs in summer. North-central MT: of 12 records, 9 in river valley, 1 in coulee, 2 on prairie (Mosimann and Rabb 1952). One found in rocky sagebrush area north of Arlee, MT (Franz 1971). Common in southeast Alberta in brushy coulees, sage flats, and along roads (Lewin 1963).

Greater Short-horned Lizard - *Phrynosoma hernandesi*

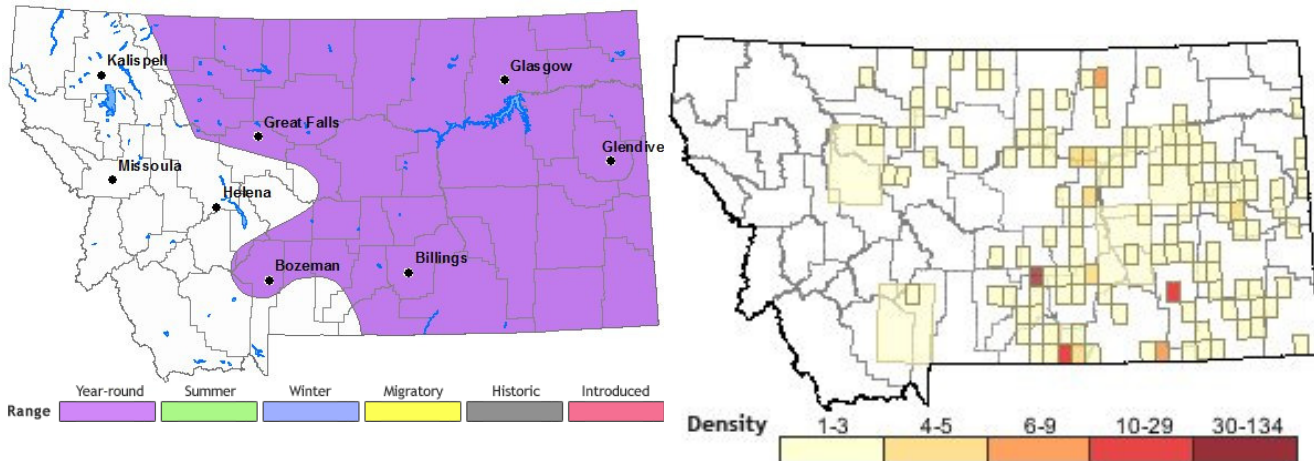


Species of Concern

Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S3

Agency Status

USFWS:
USFS: SENSITIVE
BLM: SENSITIVE



Number of Observations: 524

General Description

The Greater Short-horned Lizard body is broad and flattened. The back is spiny, with an especially noticeable single row of scales fringing each side of the body. The spines at the back of the head are about as long as wide at the base. The coloration of the back usually blends cryptically with the soil and can vary somewhat from region to region and at single localities. The maximum total length is about 15 centimeters. In males, there is a swelling at the base of the tail, and the tail is proportionally longer than in females. Newborn young have the broad and flattened body shape, and are about 2.0 to 2.5 centimeters snout-vent length and up to 3.8 centimeters by the time of first hibernation.

Habitat

Habitat use in Montana is poorly described, but appears to be similar to other regions. Reports mention individuals on ridge crests between coulees, and in sparse, short grass and sagebrush with sun-baked soil (Mosimann and Rabb 1952, Dood 1980). On the southern exposures of the Pryor Mountains, Carbon County, individuals occur among limestone outcrops in canyon bottoms of sandy soil with an open canopy of limber pine-Utah juniper, and are also present on flats of relatively pebbly or stony soil with sparse grass and sagebrush cover (P. Hendricks personal observation).

Milkshake - *Lampropeltis triangulum*

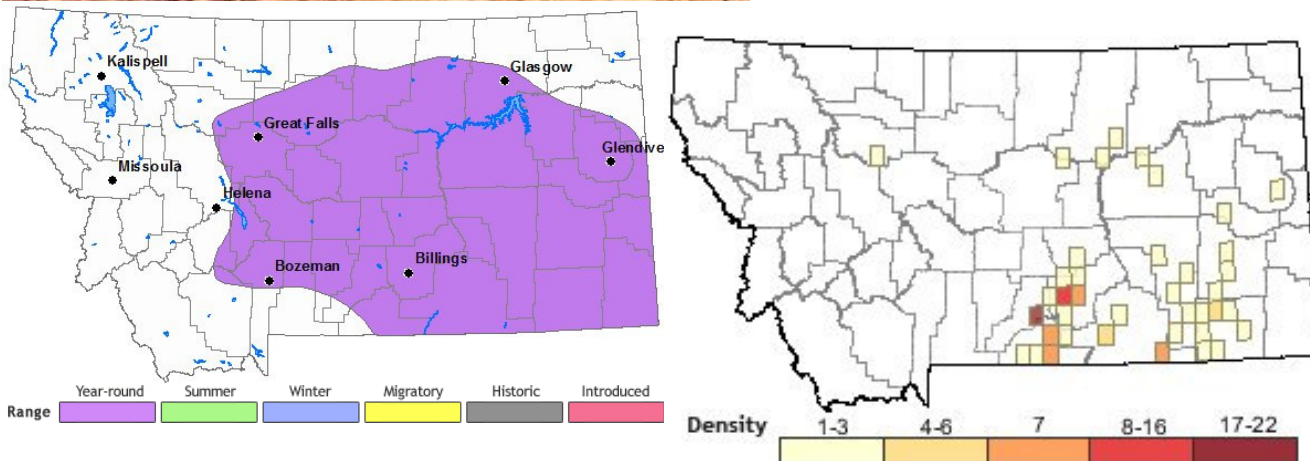


Species of Concern

Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S2

Agency Status

USFWS:
USFS: SENSITIVE
BLM: SENSITIVE



Number of Observations: 122

General Description

The back and sides of the body of the Milkshake are marked with whitish, black, and reddish or orange bands, with the reddish-orange bands bordered by the black; the snout is blackish and sometimes with whitish flecking. The bands often extend across the belly, but sometimes may be incomplete or absent, in which case the belly is whitish. Dorsal scales are smooth (unkeeled). The anal scale is not divided, as are most of the scales on the ventral surface of the tail. The neck is relatively short and thick. Total length of adults in the western Great Plains is usually 39 to 85 centimeters. Hatchlings are similar in appearance to adults, and 16 to 29 centimeters in total length. Eggs are slightly granular and range from 29 to 44 millimeters by 13 to 16 millimeters in length and breadth, depending on locality.

Habitat

Little specific information is available. Milkshakes have been reported in areas of open sagebrush-grassland habitat (Dood 1980) and ponderosa pine savannah with sandy soils (Hendricks 1999, B. Maxell personal communication, L. Vitt personal communication), most often in or near areas of rocky outcrops and hillsides or badland scarps, sometimes within city limits.

Northern Alligator Lizard - *Elgaria coerulea*



Species of Concern

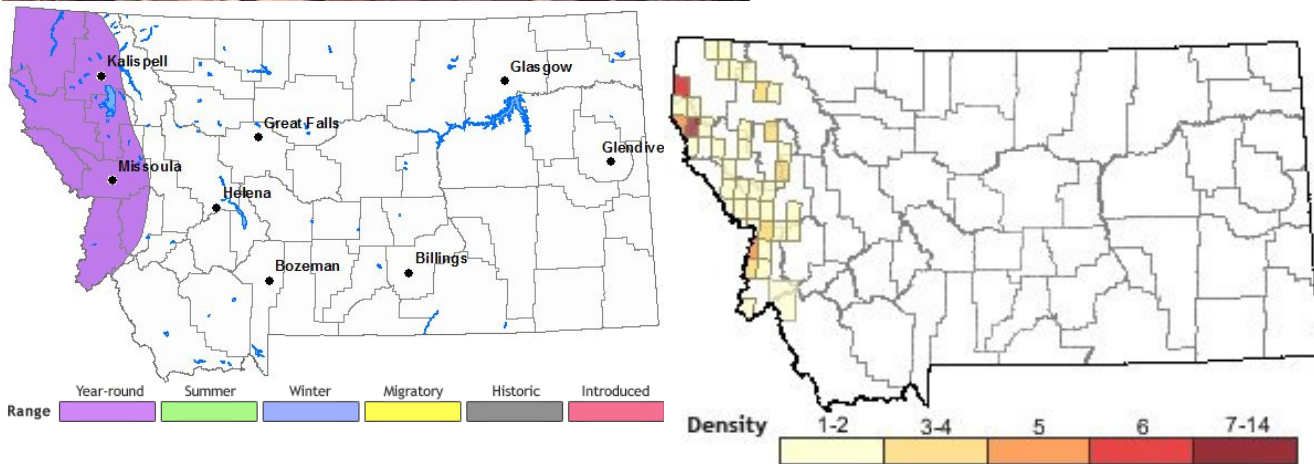
Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S3

Agency Status

USFWS:

USFS:

BLM:



Number of Observations: 96

General Description

The body of the Northern Alligator Lizard is elongate and the legs are short. The back is brown, tan, or gray to olive, yellow, or greenish. The dark sides of the body are often checkered with small darker patches. The belly scale rows are edged with a darker area giving the white to pale gray belly a banded appearance. There is a distinctive fold of skin running along each side of the body extending between the legs, revealing small granular scales when spread apart. Males have larger and broader triangular-shaped heads; juveniles have a broad reddish-tan stripe running the length of the back. Adults of *E. c. principis* are 7 to 10 centimeters snout-vent length (SVL) and up to 20 centimeters in total length; newly born young are about 2.5 to 3.0 centimeters snout-vent length.

Habitat

There is little specific information on habitat associations in Montana. Several observations have been made on south-facing slopes in fine to coarse talus, sometimes in the open, but often with some canopy cover of Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, a variety of shrubby species (serviceberry, ninebark, mock orange), and a litter layer of dried leaves and conifer needles (Werner and Reichel 1994, Hendricks and Reichel 1996, Werner et al. 1998, Boundy 2001, P. Hendricks personal observation).

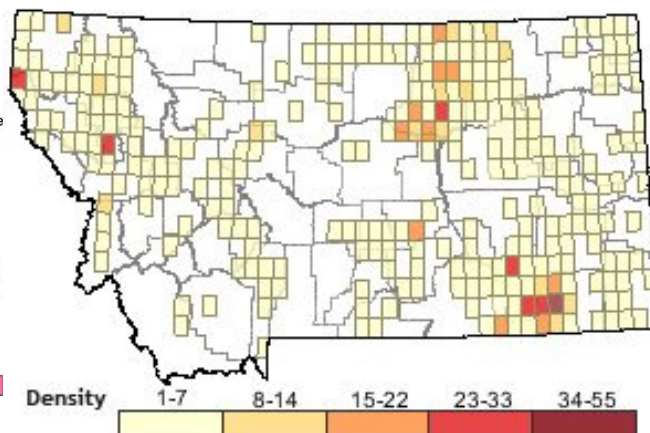
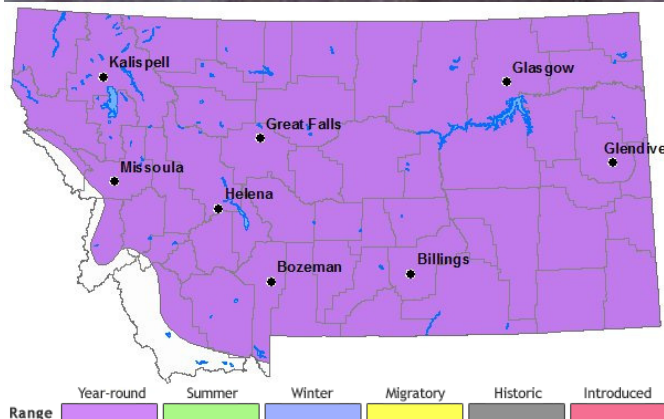
From other locations within the species' range, the Northern Alligator Lizard occurs in areas more cool and humid than most lizards tolerate, but it also appears to require some sunny clearings. It is found in coniferous forest, often in grassy grown-over areas at the margins of woodlands, in clearcuts, sometimes near streams or in sagebrush habitats, along coasts sometimes far from trees or major cover, often associated with rock outcrops and talus in some regions, and frequenting areas around abandoned buildings (Lais 1976, Nussbaum et al. 1983, St. John 2002, Stebbins 2003).

Painted Turtle - *Chrysemys picta*



Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S4

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS:
BLM:



Number of Observations: 1510

General Description

The upper shell is olive to black, with the edges of shields (plates making up the shell) bordered with yellow. The head, neck, and legs are marked with yellow lines, and a red spot appears behind the eye. The lower shell is brightly colored with red and yellow. Females may reach 9 inches in upper shell length, but males seldom reach 7 inches. Males have much longer front claws than females, and the vent is situated farther from the edge of the shell.

Habitat

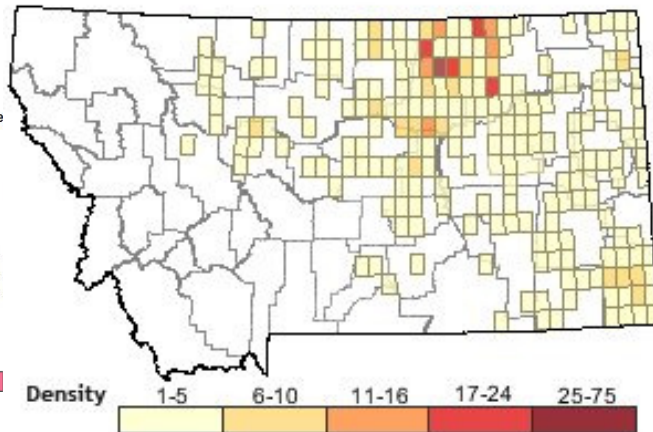
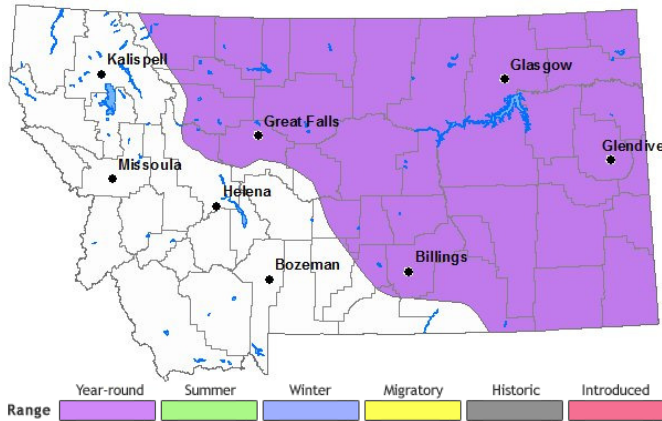
Painted Turtles are found in lakes, ponds, reservoirs, and sloughs that contain some shallow water areas and a soft bottom; also river backwaters and oxbows with little current. They often use logs and rocks for basking. Painted Turtles hibernate in bottom mud from early October to mid- or late April. They reproduce at 4 to 8 years of age, depending on climate (later in northern latitudes). Six to 20 leathery eggs are laid in nests excavated in gravel or sand. Food items include aquatic vegetation, frogs, tadpoles, small fish, and a variety of invertebrates. Found in wide variety of waterbodies, including glacial lakes (Franz 1971); but not found in oligotrophic mountain lakes above 3363 ft. in Mission Mountains (Brunson and Demaree 1951). Nest on south-facing grassy slopes in southern Canada (MacCracken et al. 1983).

Plains Gartersnake - *Thamnophis radix*



Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S4

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS:
BLM:



Number of Observations: 935

General Description

Adults range from 16 to 42 inches in length. Background color above is olive, brown, or black. This snake has an orange or yellow dorsal stripe and two greenish-yellow stripes on each side (the latter located on the third and fourth scale rows above the belly scales). It typically has black vertical bars on the upper lips.

Habitat

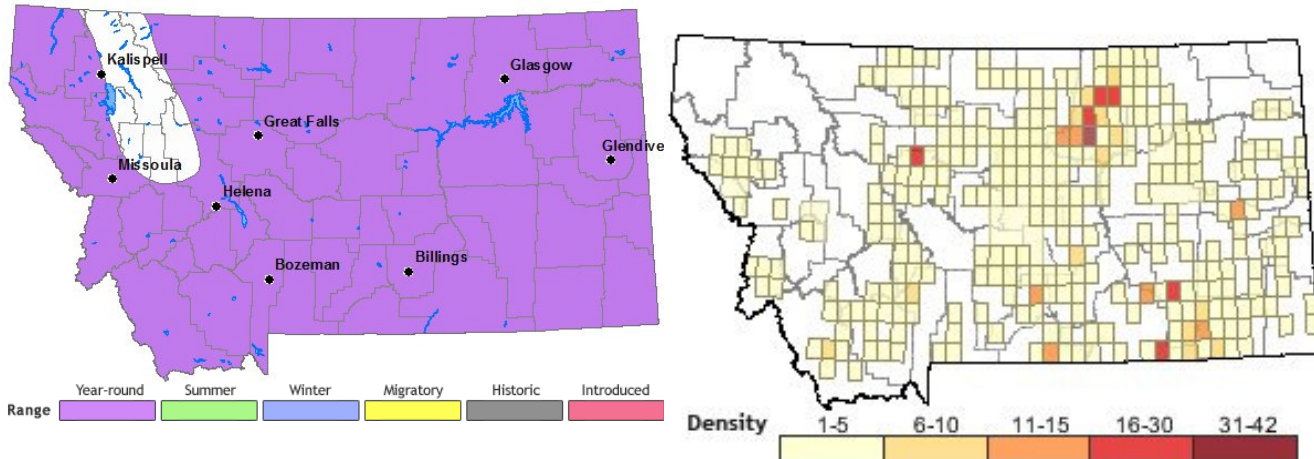
Plains Gartersnakes are found in nearly all habitats, but most commonly at lower elevations around water. Females give birth to 6 to 18 live young during summer. They eat a variety of vertebrates and invertebrates. Widely distributed over shortgrass prairie, but may be especially common near ponds and coulees.

Prairie Rattlesnake - *Crotalus viridis*



Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S4

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS:
BLM:



Number of Observations: 1181

General Description

Adults have a triangular head, blunt nose, narrow neck, and stout body; they range in length from 15 to 60 inches. The background color above varies from pale green to brown; a series of brown or black blotches edged with a dark and then a light line extends the length of the body. The blotches often merge into rings on the tail. There are also blotches on the sides. The belly is pale yellow to white and lacks blotches. All rattlesnakes have a heat-sensing pit located between the nostril and the eye. The fangs are hollow and hinged, allowing them to be folded back against the roof of the mouth. The tail ends in a rattle that helps warn potential predators of the snake's presence.

Habitat

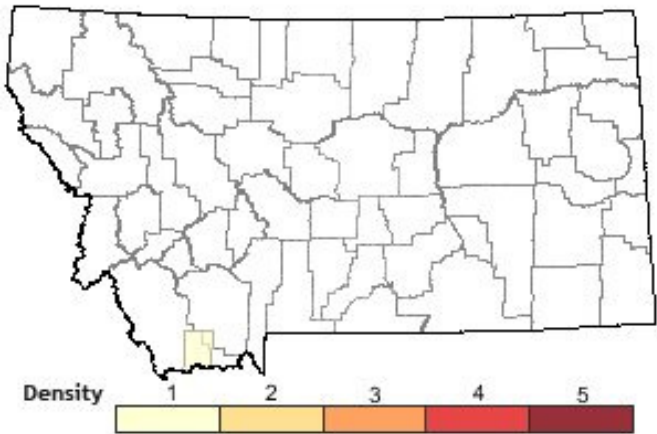
Prairie Rattlesnakes favor open and arid country but are also found in ponderosa pine stands and mixed grass-coniferous forests. They are more likely to be encountered on south-facing slopes and in areas with rock outcrops. Prairie Rattlesnakes den communally, but range up to 7 miles from the dens during the summer. Females give birth to 4 to 21 young in late summer; the young are marked similarly to adults, but colors are brighter. Prairie Rattlesnakes prey on a variety of animals, including mice, ground squirrels, and rabbits. Gravid females may aggregate at basking sites (rookeries) (Gannon and Secoy 1985). May be most common near broken country and breaks. Land use changes from range to irrigated farmland may adversely affect population (Pendlebury 1977).

Pygmy Short-horned Lizard - *Phrynosoma douglasii*



Global Rank: G5
State Rank: SNA

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS:
BLM:



Number of Observations: 1

Red-eared Slider - *Trachemys scripta*



Exotic Species (not native to Montana)

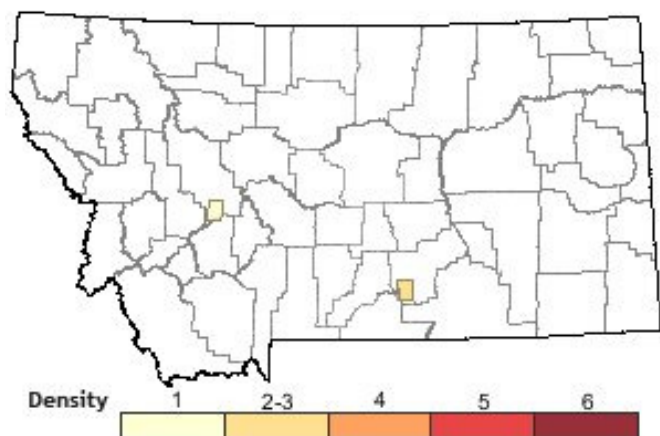
Global Rank: G5
State Rank: SNA

Agency Status

USFWS:

USFS:

BLM:



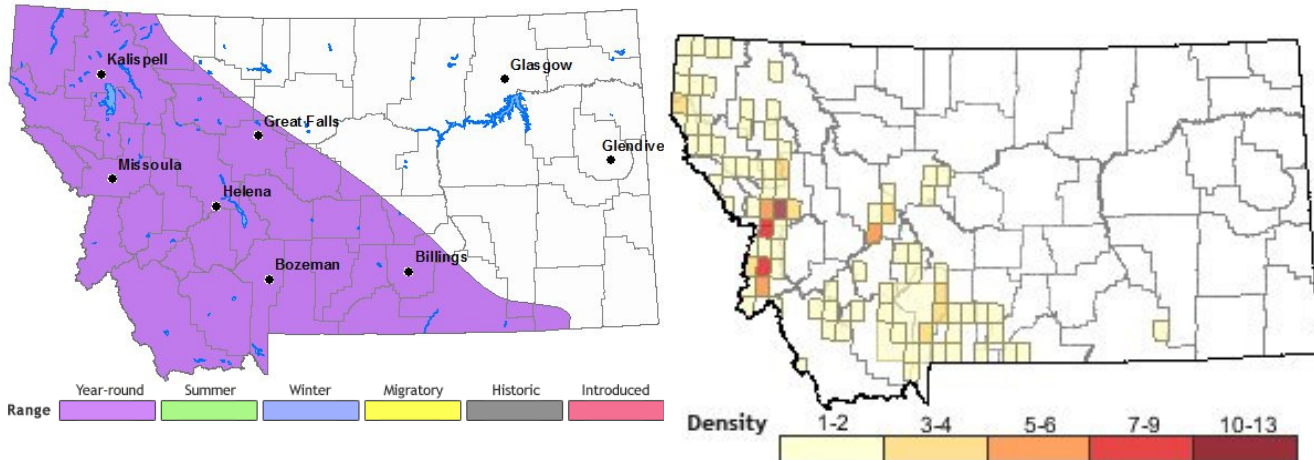
Number of Observations: 4

Rubber Boa - *Charina bottae*



Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S4

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS:
BLM:



Number of Observations: 198

General Description

This snake looks and feels like rubber, hence its name. It is a small, shiny, stout snake (12 to 28 inches) with very small eyes and a blunt tail. The scales are small and smooth, except for those on the head, which are enlarged. Dorsum of adult is plain brown to olive green, venter is cream to yellow, sometimes with dark flecks or brown, orange, or black mottling; young are pinkish to tan above, light yellow to pink below. Top of head is covered with large symmetrical plates; pupil is vertically oval. Males and some females have a spur on each side in the anal region. Total length of adults usually is 35 to 83 cm (Stebbins 1985).

Habitat

Rubber Boas are secretive, slow-moving, docile snakes, usually found under logs and rocks in either moist or dry forest habitats. They are primarily nocturnal, but occasionally may be observed sunning on roads, trails, or in open areas. They feed primarily on small mice but also take shrews, salamanders, snakes, and lizards. Two to eight young are born alive in late summer or early fall. In Mission Mountains, were usually found in large talus slides or under logs/rocks near slides (Brunson and Demaree 1951) or in leaf-litter in deep shaded Douglas-fir/cedar forest (Franz 1971). Often found in areas with many flat rocks and near water (Baxter and Stone 1980).

Smooth Greensnake - *Opheodrys vernalis*



Species of Concern

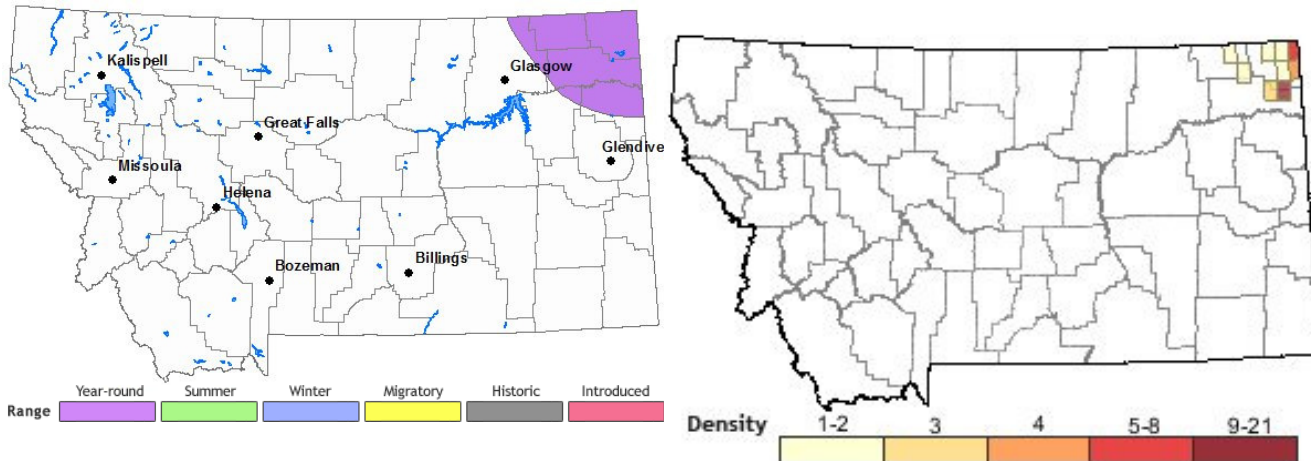
Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S2

Agency Status

USFWS:

USFS:

BLM:



Number of Observations: 43

General Description

The Smooth Greensnake is a small to medium, slender, bright green snake with smooth dorsal scales (15 rows at mid-body), and a white or yellowish underside; each nostril is centered in a single scale; the anal scale is divided. In some regions, occasional individuals are tan, and in Texas the color may be light brown with an olive wash instead of green. Young are dark olive-gray above, hatchlings are gray to brown above; adults turn blue or gray after death. The total length is usually 30 to 51 centimeters and can reach 61 centimeters; hatchlings are about 8 to 17 centimeters long (Stebbins 1985, Conant and Collins 1991).

Habitat

Little information is available for the species in Montana, though it has been reported from residential lawns, city parks, along ditches in prairie pothole country, and around wetland complexes. Based upon observations in other areas of its range, the Smooth Greensnake is known to occupy meadows, grassy marshes, moist grassy fields at forest edge, mountain shrublands, stream borders, bogs, open moist woodland, abandoned farmland, and vacant lots. Periods of inactivity are spent underground, beneath woody debris and rocks, or in rotting wood. They have been found hibernating in abandoned ant mounds. Most activity is restricted to the ground, but they may climb into low vegetation, and sometimes enter water (Hammerson 1999). This species may also be found in damp meadows bordering streams and lakes as well as drier, rocky areas, but usually only if grass or similar vegetation is present.

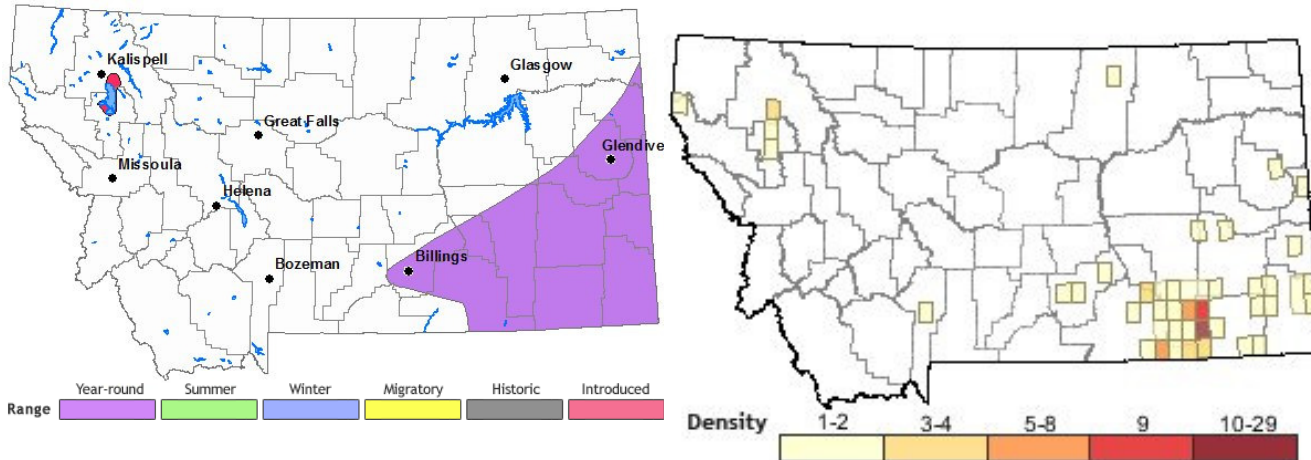
Snapping Turtle - *Chelydra serpentina*



Species of Concern

Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S3

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS:
BLM: SENSITIVE



Number of Observations: 119

General Description

The Snapping Turtle shell is hard and very serrated ("saw-toothed") on the rear edge of the carapace; the plastron is relatively small. The tail is as long or longer than the carapace, with a crest of large, bony scales. The head is large, with a hooked upper jaw and two barbels on the chin. The limbs are strong, with webbed toes and robust claws. Skin and shell color is black to tan. Maximum carapace length is 50 centimeters, but usually is less than 36 centimeters; average weight of wild individuals is 16 kilograms. In mature males, the anal opening extends farther beyond the base of the tail than in females, and is usually beyond the rear margin of the carapace (under the rear edge in females). In adults, the carapace is relatively smooth, and the longitudinal ridges are not prominent. In juveniles, there are three longitudinal ridges on the carapace; in hatchlings the carapace is rough with conspicuous ridges. Eggs are moderately pliable, somewhat brittle, and average 28 by 27 millimeters.

Habitat

Habitat use by Snapping Turtles in Montana is probably similar to elsewhere in the range, but studies are lacking and there is little qualitative information available. They have been captured or observed in backwaters along major rivers, at smaller reservoirs, and in smaller streams and creeks with permanent flowing water and sandy or muddy bottoms (Reichel 1995, Hendricks and Reichel 1996, P. Hendricks personal observation). Nesting habitat and nest sites have not been described.

Elsewhere, Snapping Turtles occur in all types of shallow freshwater habitats, such as streams, rivers, reservoirs, and ponds, especially those with a soft mud bottom and abundant aquatic vegetation or submerged brush and logs (Hammerson 1999), and in brackish water in some areas. Although found most often in shallower water, they have been reported on the bottom of lakes in water up to 10 meters deep. Temporary ponds may also be occupied. Hatchlings and juveniles tend to occupy shallower sites than mature individuals in the same water bodies. They are mostly bottom dwellers, where they spend much of their time. Although highly aquatic, they may make long movements overland if their pond or marsh dries (Baxter and Stone 1985, Ernest et al. 1994, Hammerson 1999). They hibernate singly or in groups in streams, lakes, ponds, or marshes; in bottom mud, in or under submerged logs or debris, under an overhanging bank, or in Muskrat tunnels; often in shallow water; sometimes in anoxic sites (Brown and Brooks 1994). Sometimes they bask out of water, especially younger individuals and in the northern extremes of the global range.

Nests are built in soft sand, loam, vegetation debris, or even sawdust piles, most often in open areas and often a hundred meters or more from water (Congdon et al. 1987, Ernst et al. 1994, Hammerson 1999); they also nest in Beaver and Muskrat lodges.

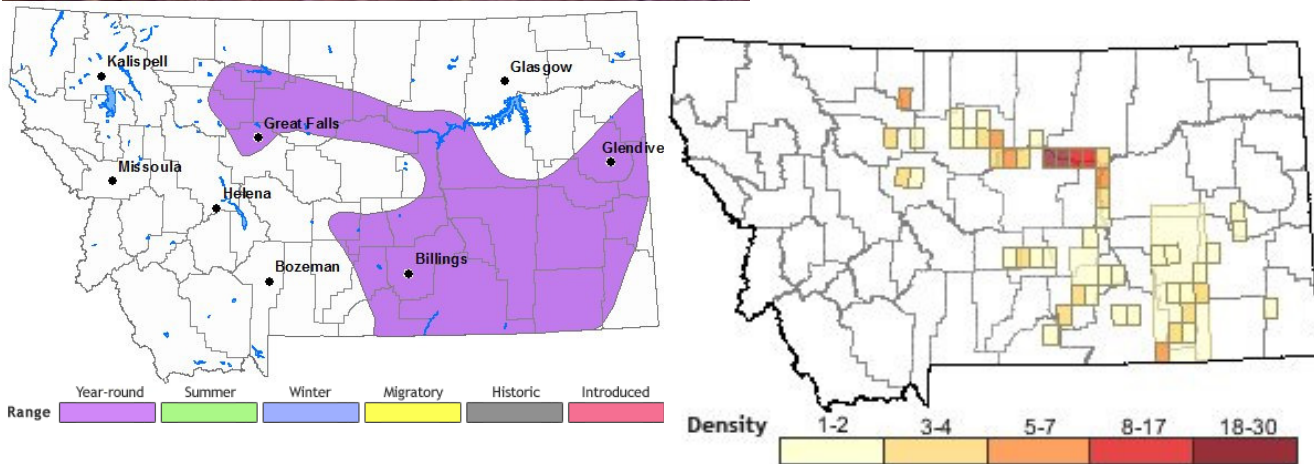
Spiny Softshell - *Apalone spinifera*



Species of Concern

Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S3

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS:
BLM: SENSITIVE



Number of Observations: 241

General Description

The shell of the Spiny Softshell is flattened (pancake-like), with flexible edges and covered with leathery skin; small conical tubercles or "spines" are present on the front edge of the carapace above the neck. The snout is tubular, with a ridge along the inner margin of each nostril, which allows this turtle to remain beneath the surface with just the snout exposed. In mature males, the carapace is like sandpaper, and marked with small dark spots or circles. The tail is thick and long, with the vent well beyond the rear edge of the carapace. In mature females, the carapace is not notably like sandpaper, is more generally mottled or marked with blotches, the tubercles at the front edge of the carapace are more prominent than in males, and the tail is relatively short. Juveniles have characteristics that are female-like, except the carapace coloration, which is male-like. In hatchlings, the carapace is olive to tan, with small dark circles, spots, or dashes, and a yellowish margin bordered by a black line. The eggs are hard and white, smooth, thick-shelled, and about 24 to 32 millimeters in diameter. Adult females can reach 52 centimeters in carapace length, but much less in adult males (which average about 10 centimeters shorter); hatchlings are about 3 to 4 centimeters in carapace length.

Habitat

Habitat use by Spiny Softshells in Montana is probably similar to elsewhere in the range, but studies are lacking and there is little qualitative information available. They occupy larger rivers and tributaries. Both sexes have been observed basking together on partially submerged logs in backwater sites of slow-moving water, and on sandy or muddy riverbanks (P. Hendricks personal observation).

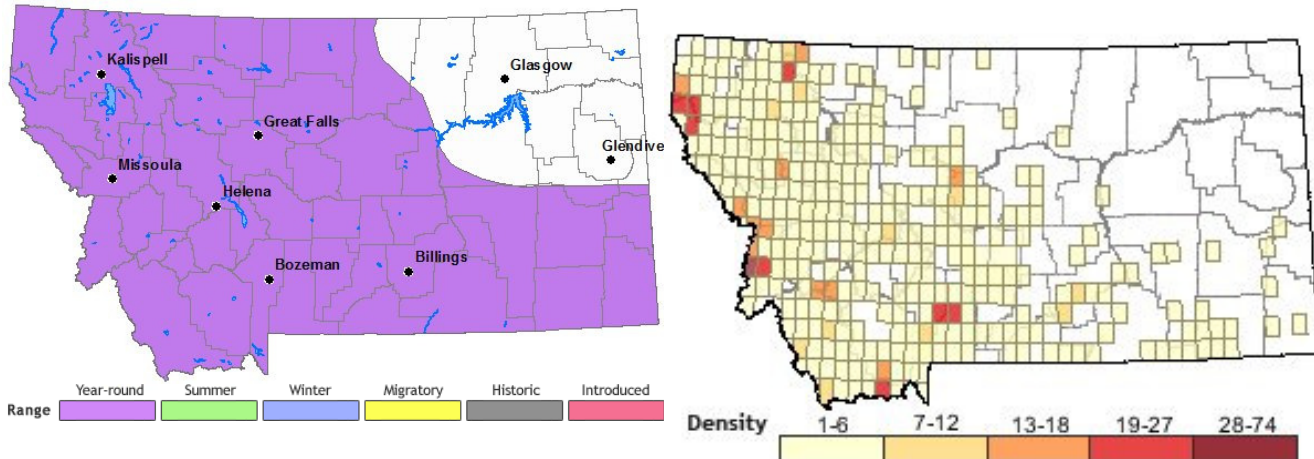
Generally, the Spiny Softshell is primarily a riverine species, occupying large rivers and river impoundments, but also occurs in lakes, ponds along rivers, pools along intermittent streams, bayous, irrigation canals, and oxbows. It usually is found in areas with open sandy or mud banks, a soft bottom, and submerged brush and other debris. Spiny Softshells bask on shores or on partially submerged logs. They burrow into the bottoms of permanent water bodies, either shallow or relatively deep (0.5 to 7.0 meters), where they spend winter. Eggs are laid in nests dug in open areas in sand, gravel, or soft soil near water (Baxter and Stone 1985, Ernst et al. 1994, Hammerson 1999, Stebbins 2003).

Terrestrial Gartersnake - *Thamnophis elegans*



Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S5

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS:
BLM:



Number of Observations: 1830

General Description

Adults vary from 16 to 43 inches in length. This snake is distinguished by three yellow stripes (one dorsal, two lateral) running the length of the body and a series of black spots situated between, and somewhat on, the stripes. The background color between the stripes is brownish or greenish. All-black individuals are occasionally found. A series of dark black/brown blotches covers most of the belly. There are normally eight scales on the upper lip.

Habitat

Terrestrial Gartersnakes are found in nearly all habitats, but most commonly at lower elevations around water. Females give birth to 6 to 18 live young during summer. They eat a variety of vertebrates and invertebrates. Common near water but also found away from water. At high elevations common on rocky cliffs and brushy talus (Brunson and Demaree 1971, Franz 1971). On prairie may be more common along brushy bottomland (Mosimann and Rabb 1952, Lewin 1963).

Western Fence Lizard - *Sceloporus occidentalis*



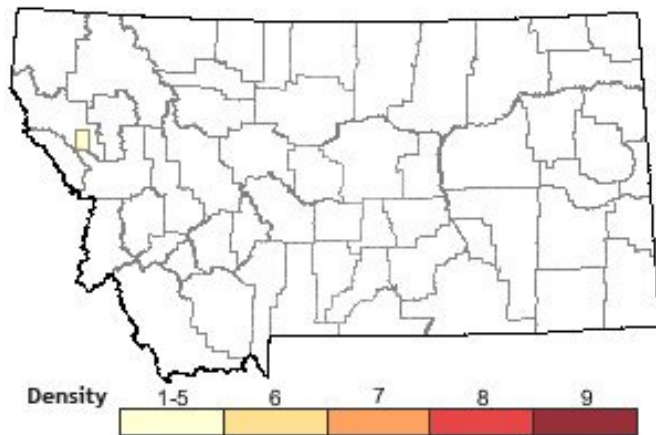
Global Rank: G5
State Rank: SU

Agency Status

USFWS:

USFS:

BLM:



Number of Observations: 5

Western Hog-nosed Snake - *Heterodon nasicus*

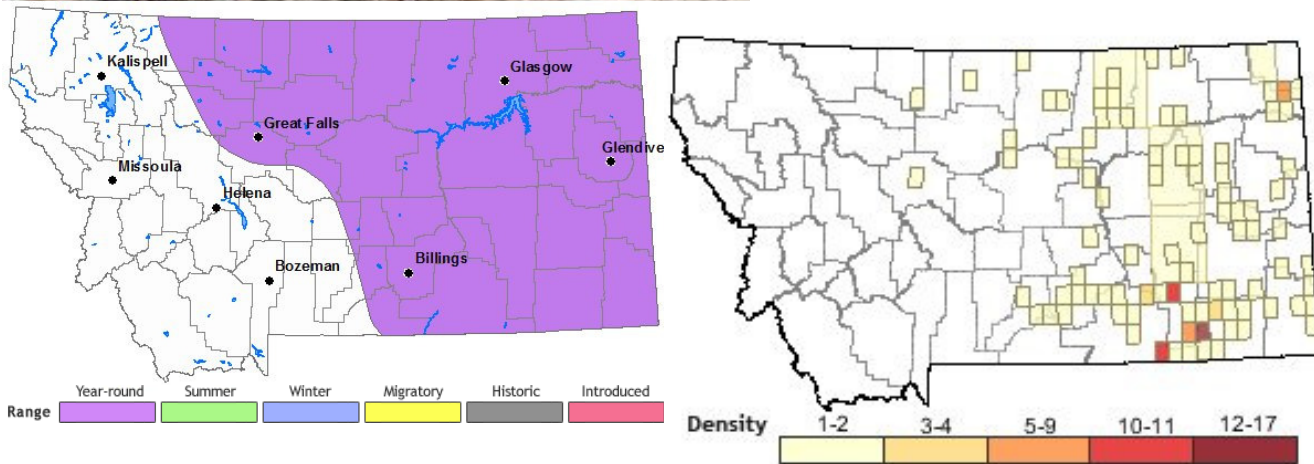


Species of Concern

Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S2

Agency Status

USFWS:
USFS: SENSITIVE
BLM: SENSITIVE



Number of Observations: 183

General Description

This is a heavy-bodied snake with a broad neck and dark blotches on the back extending from the back of the head onto the tail. There is much black pigmentation on the underside of the body, with contrasting patches of white, yellow, and orange, and the anal scale is divided. The snout is upturned, with an enlarged rostral scale that is spade-like and keeled. The dorsal scales are also keeled. There are enlarged ungrooved teeth near the rear of the upper jaws. The maximum total length is about 90 centimeters, but most individuals are less than 65 centimeters. Hatchlings are similar to adults in appearance and about 17 to 20 centimeters total length. Eggs are smooth and elongate (usually 26 to 38 millimeters by 14 to 23 millimeters in length and breadth).

Habitat

Little specific information for the state is available. They have been reported in areas of sagebrush-grassland habitat (Dood 1980) and near pine savannah in grassland underlain by sandy soil (Reichel 1995, Hendricks 1999).

In other locations, their apparent preference for arid areas, farmlands, and floodplains, particularly those with gravelly or sandy soil, has been noted. They occupy burrows or dig into soil, and less often are found under rocks or debris, during periods of inactivity (Baxter and Stone 1985, Hammerson 1999, Stebbins 2003).

Western Skink - *Eumeces skiltonianus*

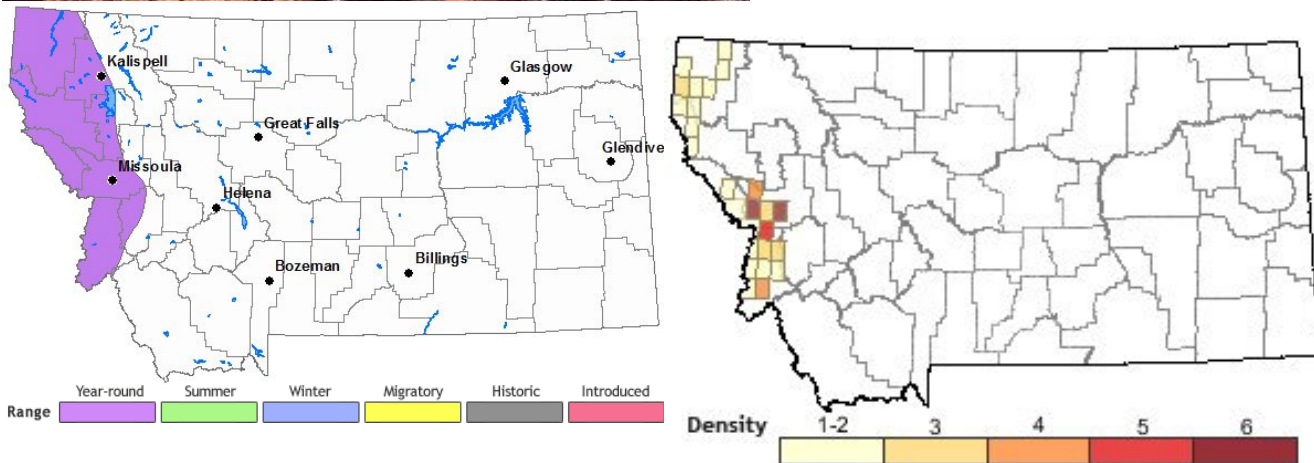


Species of Concern

Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S3

Agency Status

USFWS:
USFS:
BLM:



Number of Observations: 57

General Description

The Western Skink has a shiny appearance because the body is covered in smooth and shiny, rounded scales. The dorsal coloration consists of brown, black, and golden-yellow or cream longitudinal stripes extending from the nose to the anterior portion of the tail. Younger individuals have brilliant blue tails that become progressively duller as they age. The belly is light gray to cream-colored, with a faint greenish-blue mottling. Males develop reddish-orange coloration on the chin and sides of the head during the breeding season. Adults are about 5.0 to 8.0 centimeters snout-vent length and up to 19 centimeters total length.

Habitat

Little information is available. In Sanders County, Western Skinks were found in open ponderosa pine woodland in or near talus (Boundy 2001). Western Skinks were reported from Mineral, Missoula, and Ravalli counties in *Agropyron spicatum*-*Poa sandbergii* grasslands on southwest aspects (Ortega and Pearson 2001). These sites were described as gentle rolling terrain (less than 20% slope) with rocky areas imbedded, to rocky and steep terrain (average slope of 30%) with scattered ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir present; many of the sites supported moderate to high densities of spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*).